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SUBJECT: FLACSO: ONE ACADEMIC INSTITUTION'S IDEAS AND PEOPLE PERMEATE  
GOE

11. (SBU) Summary: Meeting new government officials, or reading the bios of long-standing ones, we are struck by how many of them come out of one small university, namely FLACSO Ecuador. Many of these individuals have more experience developing academic theories than real world policy. This situation has positive and negative ramifications for FLACSO itself, which attracts students and attention but runs the risk of being too closely associated with the results of the Correa government. End Summary.

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FLACSO FOLKS THROUGHOUT GOVERNMENT  
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12. (SBU) A disproportionate number of individuals formerly affiliated with the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) in Quito now occupy senior levels of the Correa government. Cabinet members from FLACSO include Coordinating Minister for Security Miguel Carvajal, Foreign Minister Fander Falconi, Coordinating Minister for Social Development Jeannette Sanchez, Coordinating Minister for Production Nathalie Cely, Coordinating Minister for Heritage Maria Fernanda Espinoza, and National Planning Secretary Rene Ramirez. (Note: Each coordinating minister oversees the work of several other ministries. End Note.) Examples of FLACSO-affiliated individuals elsewhere in the government are Ministry of Government and Police Under Secretary Fredy Rivera, Constitutional Court president Patricio Pazmino, National Assembly International Relations Commission president Fernando Bustamante, and Quito mayor Augusto Barrera.

13. (SBU) One reason for the government's strong FLACSO flavor is that a group of leftist FLACSO professors prepared President Correa and his Proud and Sovereign Fatherland (PAIS) movement's initial government plan for 2007-10. Many of those individuals later moved into important positions in the GOE -- FM Falconi, MFA vice minister for trade Julio Oleas, Planning Secretary Ramirez, and former Constituent Assembly president Alberto Acosta (now estranged from Correa). Several others remained at FLACSO.

14. (SBU) President Correa taught primarily at the San Francisco University in Quito, but did have FLACSO connections. He became acquainted with several FLACSO professors and researchers, such as Acosta and Falconi, as they participated in leftist forums like

Ecuador Alternativo and Jubileo 2000. Correa was an invited professor at FLACSO in 2001-05, a consultant in 2003 for the design of FLACSO's doctorate in macroeconomics curriculum (supervised by then economics program coordinator and now foreign minister Falconi), and co-author of a book of economic proposals with other FLACSO economic professors. Meanwhile, Correa broke with the more conservative San Francisco University of Quito over what a university official told us was a disagreement over Correa's independence and class size after Correa completed a PhD in the U.S. funded by the university.

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THE GOOD AND BAD FOR FLACSO  
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15. (SBU) Opened in 1975, FLACSO Ecuador is a small center for graduate studies that forms part of the regional FLACSO system. It enjoys a reputation as one of Ecuador's best academic institutions, in large part because its faculty members typically have doctorates earned in foreign universities. FLACSO currently has some 700 students, 27 academic staff, and 50 researchers. It offers masters and doctorate degrees in the fields of political science, sociology, urban studies, communication, public policy, international relations, anthropology and socio-environmental studies. Like other Ecuadorian universities, it receives about 40

percent of its budget from the government.

16. (SBU) We discussed the FLASCO/government relationship with the Faro Group, an NGO that conducted a study on ties between political parties and think-tanks in Ecuador. A senior FARO staffer attributed the Correa government's ties to FLACSO to the PAIS movement's rudimentary organizational development, the lack of a meritocratic system, and lack of adequate personnel within the Ecuadorian civil service.

17. (SBU) The FARO staffer pointed out that most of the GOE's attempts to connect public policies with academia are implemented through FLACSO. One such attempt was a collaborative agreement in the fields of education and research that Government Minister Gustavo Jalkh and FLACSO head Adrian Bonilla signed in June. For the many former academics in the Correa government, it probably seems natural to look to a highly regarded university like FLACSO for the best advice available locally. The FLACSO academics involved are generally those of a leftist ideological orientation who are likely to legitimize the political positions and policies the government has already adopted.

18. (SBU) FLACSO professors' views are not all pro-government, and many professors want the institution to remain pluralistic. FLACSO's political science department generally tends to be more critical of GOE policies. FLACSO political science program coordinator Simon Pachano, for example, is a regular newspaper columnist who often criticizes policies implemented by the GOE. Another FLACSO political science professor expressed concern to us that FLACSO would forever be associated with Correa's policies. On the other hand, he recognized that people were interested in studying at FLACSO as a way to get connected or obtain employment in the public sector.

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COMMENT

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19. (SBU) The Correa administration's strong reliance on one small university as its customary recruiting center for senior officials reflects the scarcity of talented individuals with a compatible ideological framework, the GOE's preference for those personally known by the core government team, and FLACSO's strong reputation. Drawing so heavily from a university means that GOE policies often have an academic flavor and reflect the fact that many officials need to gain experience in real world policy implementation.

HODGES